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World demographic trends

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/2, provides an overview of demographic trends for the world, its major geographic areas and selected countries, and for various development groups. It focuses on the major changes during recent decades and the projected changes during the time frame for achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The topics covered by the report include population size and growth, fertility and family planning, mortality, international migration, urbanization and changing population age structures, particularly population ageing.

The world's population was 7.3 billion in 2015, and it is projected to reach 8.5 billion by 2030, with most of the increase occurring in Africa and Asia. Cities will absorb nearly all of global population growth between 2015 and 2030. The population is likely to continue growing during the rest of the century, reaching 11.2 billion by 2100 in the medium-variant projection.

There has been substantial recent progress in lowering child and maternal mortality and in combatting the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Despite this good news, efforts to reduce mortality will need to be sustained and strengthened in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3, which seeks to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

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There is great diversity in recent population trends and their expected future trajectory across countries and major geographic areas, driven primarily by differences in levels and trends of fertility. While some countries will experience a decline in population size between 2015 and 2030, in others the population will increase by over 50 per cent. A difficulty for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda is that much of the population growth between 2015 and 2030 will be concentrated in countries facing the largest challenges in ending poverty and hunger and ensuring health, education and equality for all.

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I. Introduction

1. During the next 15 years the world's population is expected to increase by over 1 billion people, and the international community will face the challenge of enabling the expanding population to achieve higher standards of living while minimizing the negative impacts of human activity on the environment.

2. The demographic trends presented in the present report are based mainly on the results presented in *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision*, the twenty-fourth round of the official United Nations population estimates and projections prepared biennially by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The report also draws on other databases created and maintained by the Population Division. Data on urbanization and on the size and growth of cities are from *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision*. Data on the number and composition of international migrants are from *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2015 Revision*. Data about contraceptive use and unmet need for family planning are taken from *World Contraceptive Use 2015* and from *Model-based Estimates and Projections of Family Planning Indicators 2015*. Information about Government policies regarding selected demographic trends is taken from the *2015 Revision of the World Population Policies* database.

II. Population size and projected future growth

3. The global population stood at 7.3 billion in 2015 (table 1). Currently, the world's population continues to grow though more slowly than in the recent past. Globally, the population growth rate peaked in the late 1960s, when the world's population was growing at more than 2 per cent per year. The growth rate has declined continually since that time and today the global population is growing by 1.2 per cent per year, adding approximately 83 million people annually. The population is projected to increase by more than one billion people within the next 15 years, reaching 8.5 billion in 2030, and to increase further to 9.7 billion in 2050 and to 11.2 billion by 2100.

Table 1
Population of the world and major areas, 1950-2100 (millions)

	1950	*1990*	*2015*	*2030*	*2050*	*2100*
World	2 525	5 310	7 349	8 501	9 725	11 213
Africa	229	632	1 186	1 679	2 478	4 387
Asia	1 394	3 202	4 393	4 923	5 267	4 889
Europe	549	721	738	734	707	646
Latin America and the Caribbean	169	447	634	721	784	721
Northern America	172	281	358	396	433	500
Oceania	13	27	39	47	57	71

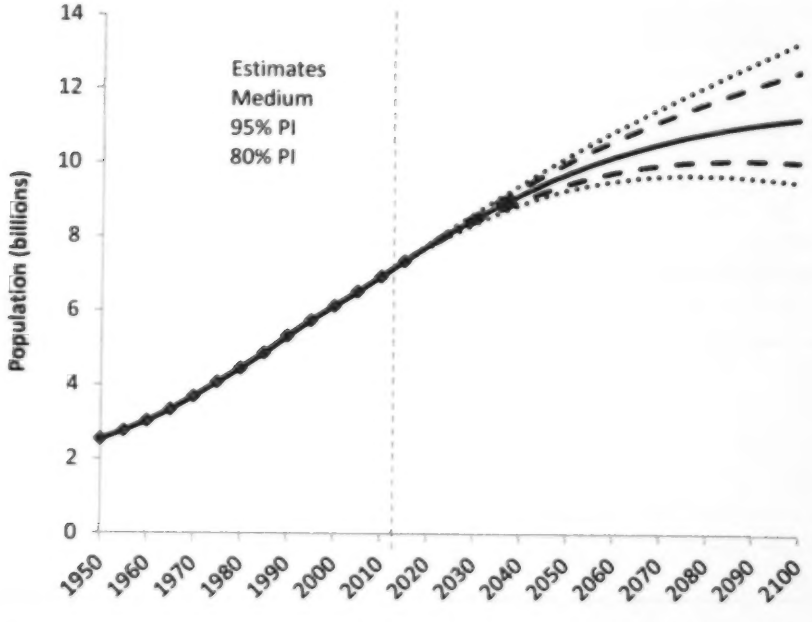
4. Since the 1970s, the global population has grown by about 1 billion people approximately every 12 years. It reached 5 billion in 1987, 6 billion in 1998, 7 billion in 2011, and is projected to reach 8 billion around 2023. The relative constancy of

population increments despite declining growth rates is due to the larger starting population every year — until now, the pace of decline in the population growth rate has been just enough to keep the annual addition to population size close to constant. Increments to the population will start decreasing during the timeline for the Sustainable Development Goals. Adding the ninth billion is projected to take about 14 years; the tenth billion, another 18 years; and the eleventh billion, a further 31 years.

5. As with any type of projection, there is a degree of uncertainty surrounding the most recent United Nations population projections. The results presented above are based on the medium projection variant, which assumes a decline of fertility for countries where large families are still prevalent as well as a slight increase of fertility in several countries with fewer than two children per woman on average. Survival prospects are also projected to improve in all countries. The uncertainty surrounding the median trajectories is accounted for with statistical methods that generate prediction intervals with an associated probability that the actual outcome will be contained therein. For example, one can say with a 95 per cent degree of certainty that the global population will number between 8.4 and 8.6 billion in 2030 and between 9.5 and 13.3 billion in 2100 (figure I). In other words, the world's population is virtually certain to continue growing over the next few decades. Later in the century, the increase is likely to continue, but there is roughly a 1-in-4 chance that the overall growth of the world's population will cease by 2100.

Figure I

Population of the world: estimates for 1950-2015 and medium-variant projections, as well as 80 and 95 per cent prediction intervals, for 2015-2100

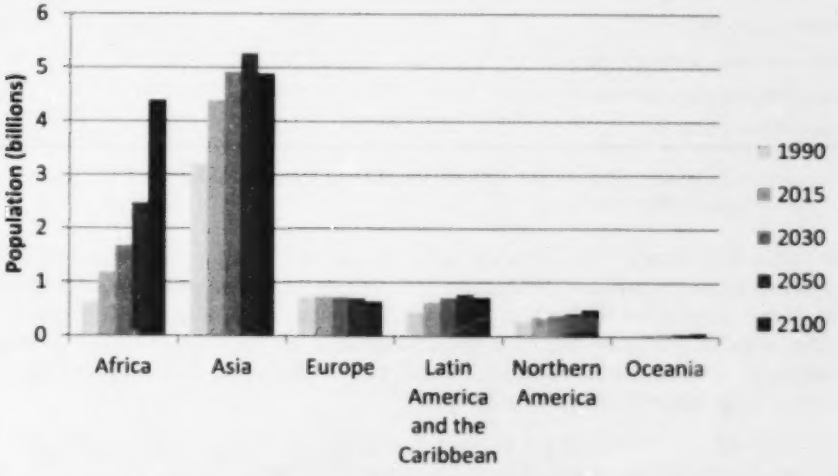


6. The regional dimensions of population growth have important implications for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2015, of the world's 7.3 billion people, 4.4 billion lived in Asia, 1.2 billion in Africa, 738 million

in Europe, 634 million in Latin America and the Caribbean, 358 million in Northern America and 39 million in Oceania (table 1).

7. Figure II shows that the projected growth of the world's population will be spread unevenly across major geographic regions. Between 2015 and 2030, Africa and Asia will each gain about half a billion inhabitants. In Africa, this will represent a 42 per cent increase in population, while in Asia it will represent an increase of 12 per cent. Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America, and Oceania will experience population growth of 14 per cent, 11 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively. The population of Europe, by contrast, is projected to decline slightly by 2030.

Figure II
Population of major areas of the world, selected years from 1990 to 2100



8. Looking beyond 2030, in the medium-variant projection the populations of Asia and of Latin America and the Caribbean are projected to peak sometime around 2060 and decline thereafter. The population of Africa is projected to continue to grow at a relatively rapid pace, more than doubling between 2030 and 2100. The populations of Northern America and Oceania are projected to continue to grow at a modest pace throughout the rest of the century, while declining population totals in Europe are projected to continue.

9. A major challenge for the 2030 Agenda is that much of the population growth between 2015 and 2030 will be concentrated in countries facing the largest gaps in fighting poverty and improving health and education. Population growth remains especially high in the group of 48 countries designated by the United Nations as the least developed countries, of which 27 are in Africa. Although the growth rate of the least developed countries is projected to slow from its current 2.4 per cent annually, the population of this group is projected to increase by nearly 40 per cent by 2030 (table 2). The population of the 31 low-income countries, as categorized by the World Bank in 2015, is projected to grow by 45 per cent between 2015 and 2030. In terms of sheer size, the lower-middle-income countries as a group will account for the largest increment. The population of this group of countries will grow by 616 million persons, an increase of 21 per cent between 2015 and 2030. The concentration of

population growth in the poorest countries will make it harder for those governments to eradicate poverty and inequality, combat hunger and malnutrition, expand education enrolment and health systems, improve the provision of basic services and implement other elements of a sustainable development agenda to ensure that no one is left behind.

Table 2
Population by development or income group, 1990-2030 (millions)

	1990	*2015*	*2030*
More developed regions	1 144	1 251	1 284
Less developed regions	4 165	6 098	7 217
Least developed countries	510	954	1 326
High-income countries	1 203	1 401	1 475
Upper-middle-income countries	1 881	2 390	2 567
Lower-middle-income countries	1 901	2 916	3 532
Low-income countries	323	639	924

Note: Income levels (per capita gross national income) are from World Bank (2015), *World Development Indicators*.

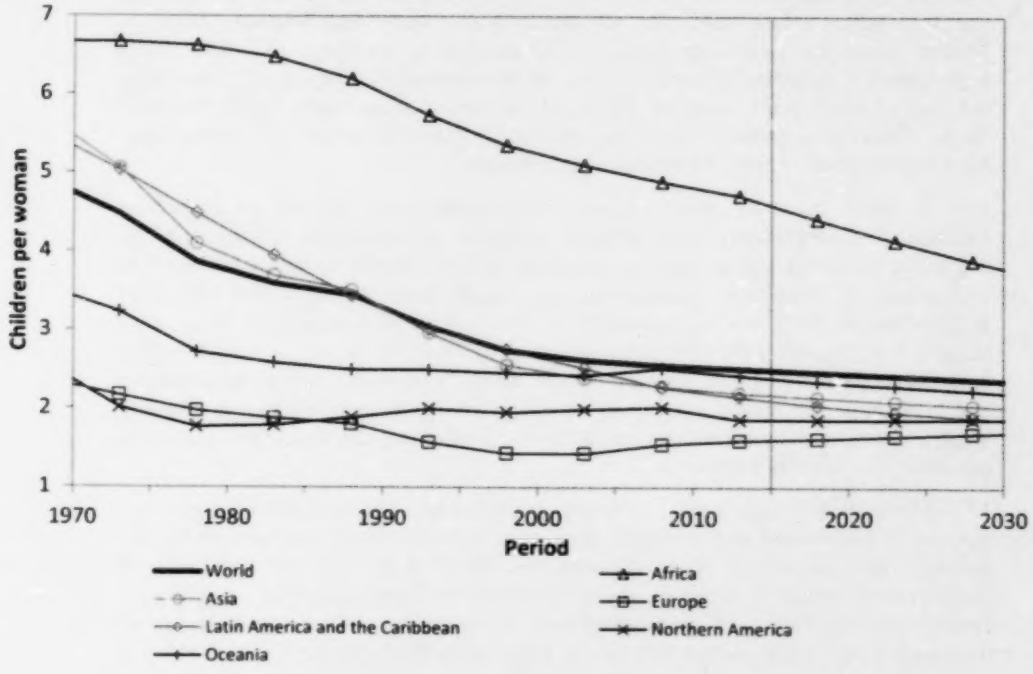
10. A small number of countries will account for a large proportion of global population growth between 2015 and 2030. Of the 1.2 billion persons to be added to the global population in the next 15 years, 50 per cent will live in just 9 countries: India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, China, Ethiopia, Indonesia, United States of America and United Republic of Tanzania, listed in order of population increment by 2030.

11. Growth trends will likely present the largest challenges in the countries with the largest relative population gains. There are 15 countries, nearly all in Africa, that are projected to experience greater than 50 per cent growth in their populations by 2030. At the other end of the spectrum, Japan, Lebanon and 12 European countries are projected to experience a reduction in population size of 5 per cent or greater between 2015 and 2030, typically due to low fertility combined with net out-migration or low levels of immigration.

III. Fertility and family planning

12. The world's level of total fertility has fallen from an average of 4.5 children per woman in 1970-1975 to 2.5 children per woman in 2010-2015. It is projected to reach 2.4 children per woman by 2025-2030 (figure III).

Figure III
Total fertility (children per woman) for the world and major areas, from 1970-1975 to 2025-2030



13. In the early 1970s, fertility was above four children per woman in most countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania (figure IV). At that time, 70 per cent of the world's population lived in countries where women had four or more children on average; in 2010-2015, just 14 per cent of the world's population did so. Today, high fertility is found mainly in countries of sub-Saharan Africa, where fertility declines started from a higher initial level, began later and proceeded more slowly than in other areas. Of the 48 countries where fertility averaged four or more children per woman in 2010-2015, 40 were in sub-Saharan Africa, and most belonged to the group of least developed countries. Because of persistently high levels of fertility, these countries have a young age structure, and their populations are growing rapidly.

14. Many Governments, including most of those where fertility remains above four children per woman, regard their fertility level as being too high and have policies aimed at lowering it. In Africa, 83 per cent of countries had such policies in 2015, as did 38 per cent of those in Asia; 33 per cent, in Latin America and the Caribbean; and 56 per cent, in Oceania. All but one of the least developed countries had such policies.

15. While high fertility persists in some areas, a growing number of countries have reached levels of fertility that are below the threshold required for replacement of the population over time (that is, total fertility below 2.1 children per woman). In the early 1970s, fewer than one in five people worldwide lived in a country with below-replacement fertility; today, almost half of the world's population does so. In the

1970s, nearly all of the countries with below-replacement fertility were in Europe or Northern America, whereas the 83 countries with below-replacement fertility in 2010-2015 include 20 in Asia, 17 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 3 in Oceania and 1 in Africa (Mauritius), plus all countries of Europe and Northern America. Several countries, including Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam, experienced exceptionally rapid declines in the national fertility level, from more than six children per woman in 1970-1975 to below-replacement levels in 2010-2015. Twenty-five countries or areas, almost all found in Europe or Eastern Asia, have fertility levels below 1.5 children per woman.

16. As more countries have reached below-replacement fertility, an increasing number of Governments have adopted policies to encourage higher fertility, motivated at least in part by concern about the society's ability to adjust to the speed and degree of population ageing that will result from sustained low levels of fertility. As of 2015, the Governments of 29 countries of Europe and 26 in other regions had policies aimed at increasing fertility. Policies to support work-family balance, in particular by helping parents to meet the everyday needs for childcare and to manage the multiple demands on their time through flexibility in working arrangements, may be effective approaches for addressing the social and economic causes of low fertility levels.

17. The increasing availability of family planning services has enabled a growing number of women and men to realize their right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children. In 2015, more than 90 per cent of Governments provided direct or indirect support for family planning. Worldwide, current contraceptive use among married or in-union women aged 15 to 49 increased from 55 per cent in 1990 to 64 per cent in 2015 (figure V). By 2015, the average level of use was above 50 per cent in all regions except Eastern, Middle and Western Africa and Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Nine out of ten contraceptive users rely on methods of contraception that are known to be effective.

18. Because the proportion of women who want to stop or delay childbearing has also been increasing, the marked rise in the level of contraceptive use between 1990 and 2015 was not accompanied by an equal decline in the unmet need for family planning (figure V). An estimated twelve per cent of married or in-union women had an unmet need for family planning in 2015; that is, they were fecund and wanted to stop or delay childbearing but were not using any method of contraception. The average level of unmet need was just 3 percentage points lower in 2015 than in 1990. Among regions of the world, unmet need is highest in Eastern, Middle and Western Africa and in Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. In three fourths of the countries in those regions, 20 per cent or more of married or in-union women had an unmet need for family planning in 2015. However, reducing the gap between contraceptive use and total demand is relevant for countries in all regions. Governments have agreed in SDG targets 3.7 and 5.6 to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, by 2030. These estimates for 2015 indicate the need for an accelerated investment in the provision of voluntary and high-quality family planning information, counselling and services.

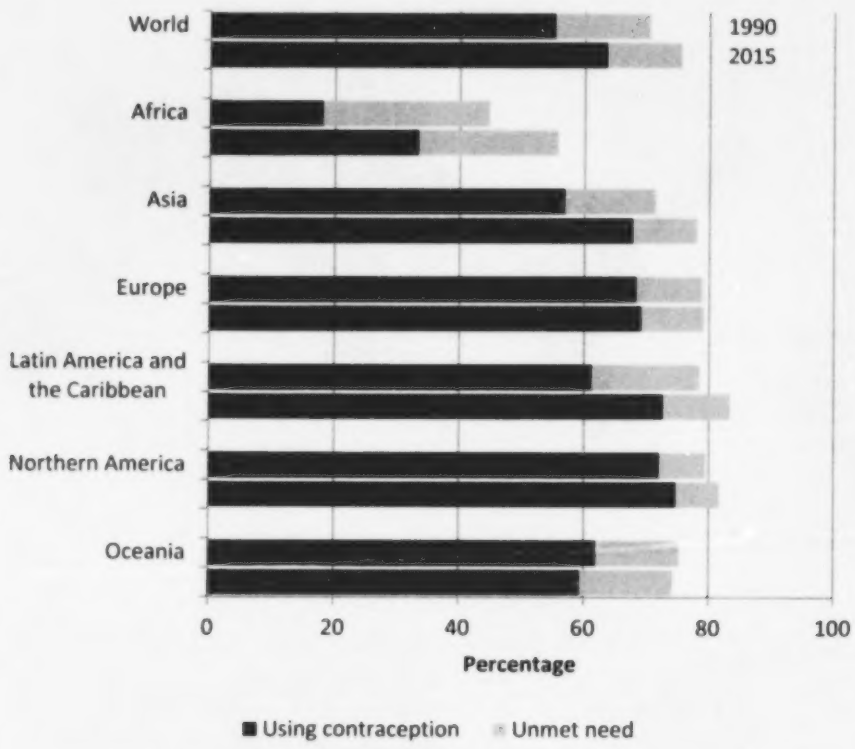
Figure IV
Total fertility (children per woman) for countries or areas, 1970-1975 and 2010-2015

A. 1970-1975

B. 2010-2015

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.

Figure V
Levels of contraceptive use and unmet need for family planning for the world and major areas, 1990 and 2015
(Percentage of married or in-union women)



Note: The upper bar for each area shows data for 1990 and the lower bar shows data for 2015.

19. Despite their views regarding the level of total fertility, most Governments favour reducing the adolescent birth rate in their country. As of 2013, 90 per cent of Governments had adopted policies aimed at decreasing adolescent fertility. Childbearing during adolescence can have negative social and economic consequences for girls, especially if they drop out of school. Early childbearing also carries risks to the health of both mother and child. Pregnancy and childbirth complications are the second leading cause of death among women between the ages of 15 and 19 globally. Adolescent pregnancies are often unintended, and the level of unmet need for family planning is higher among sexually active adolescents than among older women. To counter these risks, adolescents need sexual and reproductive health-care services that are designed to meet their specific needs.

20. Adolescent fertility has declined nearly everywhere since the period 1990-1995. The global average adolescent birth rate (annual births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19) was 65 in the early 1990s but declined to 46 by the period 2010-2015 (figure VI). The rate remains high in Africa, where 24 countries had an adolescent birth rate above 100 in the years 2010 to 2015. However, this is a reduction

compared to the period 1990-1995, when 41 countries had an adolescent birth rate in that range. Although the adolescent birth rate in Latin America and the Caribbean has declined significantly, the regional average remains relatively high, at 67 births per thousand women aged 15 to19 during the years 2010-2015. In contrast, for all countries in Europe and North America and for the vast majority in Asia and Oceania, the adolescent birth rate was below 50 in the period 2010-2015. Based on past trends, the United Nations has projected further declines between the years 2010-2015 and 2025-2030. However, the prospects for this continued decline will depend on investments in girls' education and expanded access to information, education and services in the area of sexual and reproductive health.

21. Most countries have also experienced declines in the proportion of adolescents who are married or in a union, with Africa and Asia showing the largest decreases in this proportion between 1990 and 2015. However, the prevalence of early union formation has hardly changed in Latin America and the Caribbean. Adolescent marriage and union formation is now more common there than in all other major areas of the world except Africa (figure VII).

Figure VI

Adolescent fertility for the world and major areas, 1990-1995 and 2010-2015

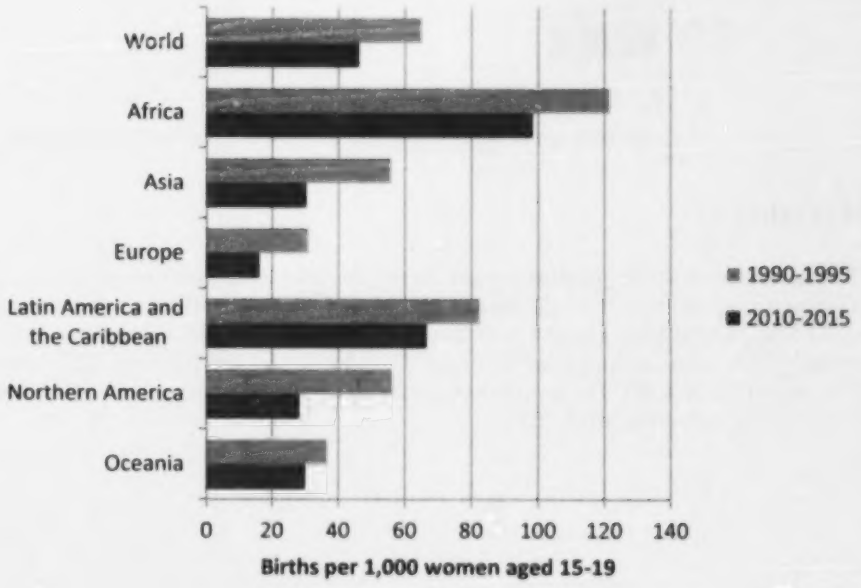
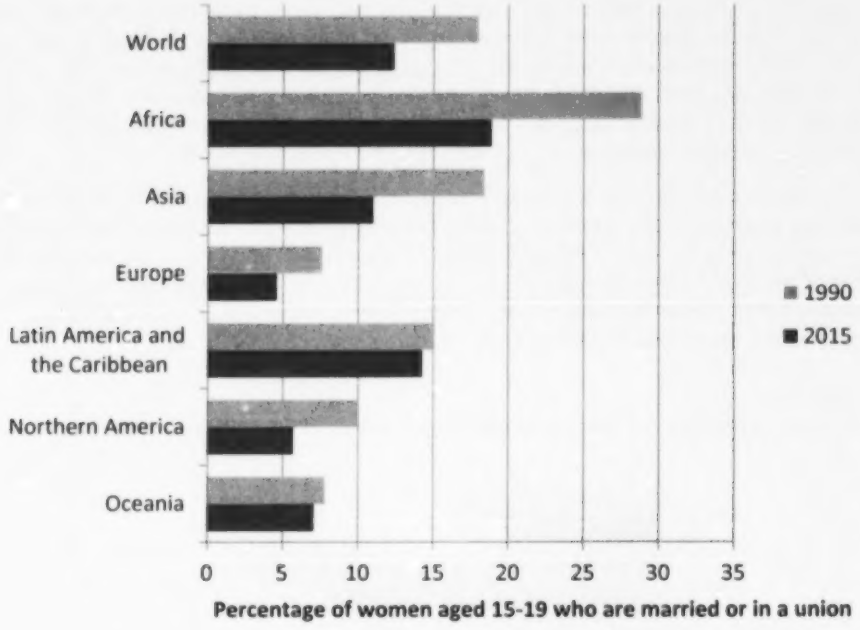


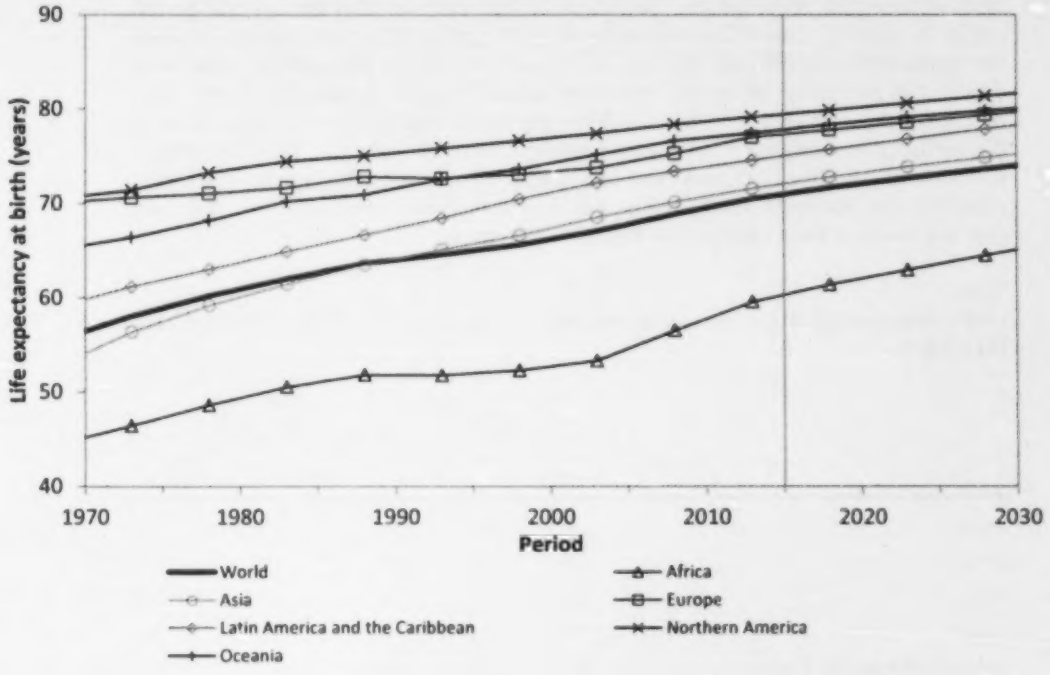
Figure VII
Percentage of women aged 15-19 years who are married or in a union for the world and major areas, 1990 and 2015



IV. Mortality

22. Sustained mortality declines began in the late nineteenth century in the more developed regions, but they accelerated and spread globally following the Second World War. Global life expectancy at birth has risen by 23 years since 1950-1955, reaching 70.5 years in the period 2010-2015, or 68.2 years for men and 72.7 years for women (figure VIII). The world average for life expectancy is projected to reach 73.7 years by the period 2025-2030.

Figure VIII
Life expectancy at birth for the world and major areas, from 1970-1975 to 2025-2030



23. The highest life expectancies today exceed 80 years. In the early 1990s, no country had achieved a life expectancy that high, while today 33 countries or areas have reached or surpassed that threshold, led by Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China (83.7 years) and Japan (83.3 years). However, 77 countries or areas have still not reached a life expectancy of 70 years, and in 27 of them life expectancy is below 60 years.

24. Although life expectancy has risen nearly everywhere since the 1970s, progress lagged in Africa during the 1980s and 1990s, and life expectancy declined in the countries most affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, reversing some gains of the past. More recently, with the expanded availability of antiretroviral treatment, HIV/AIDS-related mortality appears to have passed a peak in most of those countries, and African life expectancy rose by about 6 years between 2000 and 2005 and 2010 and 2015. However, it remains 12 to 18 years lower in Africa than in other major areas (figure VIII). Of the 27 countries with life expectancy below 60 years in the period 2010-2015, only one (Afghanistan) is outside Africa. Life expectancy is below 50 years in three countries (Central African Republic, Lesotho and Swaziland) mainly because of the impact of HIV/AIDS.

25. In the early stages of the transition towards lower levels of mortality, reductions in the risk of death occur mainly among young children. High infant and child mortality is due largely to the high incidence and fatality of communicable diseases. Reducing mortality from these diseases depends largely on improvements in sanitation, nutrition and health technologies such as vaccines. Between 1990 and

1995 and 2010 and 2015, under-five mortality — the probability of dying between birth and a child's fifth birthday — declined by 45 per cent worldwide. While the absolute change was greatest in Africa, all major areas showed large declines in relative terms. In Asia and Europe, the level fell by over half during this period (table 3). Notably, under-five mortality declined substantially more rapidly between the years 1990 to 1995 and 2010 to 2015, at a pace of 3.0 per cent per year, than during the preceding 20 years, when the annual decline averaged 2.1 per cent. Africa and Asia showed substantially faster decline in the more recent period than in the earlier. Although the Millennium Development Goal target of reducing under-five mortality by two thirds between 1990 and 2015 was not achieved, the concerted efforts of Governments, civil society and the international community to reach that goal are likely to have accelerated the pace of progress.

Table 3
Under-five mortality for the world and major areas, in 1970-1975, 1990-1995 and 2010-2015

	Under-five mortality (per 1,000 births)			*Annual decrease (in percentage)*	
	1970-1975	*1990-1995*	*2010-2015*	*1970-1975 to 1990-1995*	*1990-1995 to 2010-2015*
World	139	91	50	2.1	3.0
Africa	220	167	90	1.4	3.1
Asia	144	83	39	2.7	3.8
Europe	29	15	6	3.2	4.4
Latin America and the Caribbean	112	49	26	4.1	3.2
Northern America	21	10	7	3.6	2.0
Oceania	59	38	26	2.2	1.9

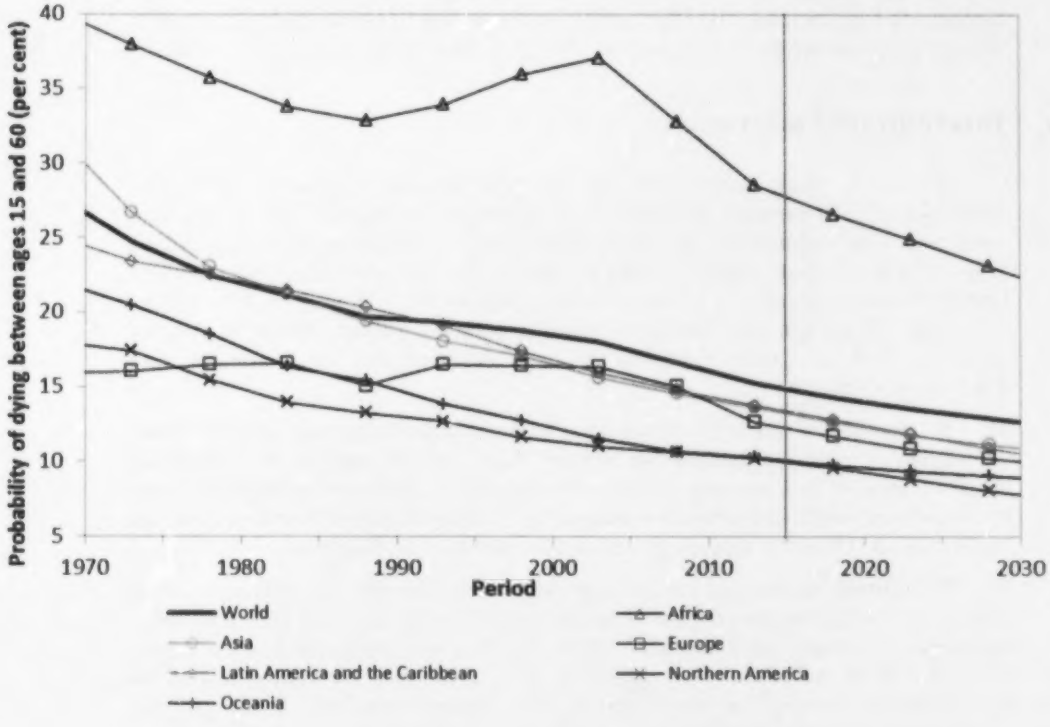
26. The Sustainable Development Goals include target 3.2, which specifies that all countries should aim to reduce under-five mortality to no more than 25 deaths below age 5 per 1,000 live births by 2030. The latest mortality projections from the United Nations suggest that the desired level will be reached or surpassed by 2025-2030 in all major areas of the world except Africa, where the extrapolation of past trends suggests that the rate may remain above 60 deaths per 1,000 live births in the years 2025-2030. In fact, there are 66 countries, including 46 in Africa, 11 in Asia, 5 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 4 in Oceania, where the currently projected trends fall short of the target, suggesting the need for significant additional resources and effort in order to accelerate the future decline and attain the desired reduction in child mortality by 2030.

27. Once mortality from communicable diseases declines to low levels, further reductions in mortality depend largely on mitigating the effects of non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, cancers and diabetes, which affect mainly adults. However, in many countries adults continue to face high levels of risk from both communicable and non-communicable diseases. Accordingly, the Sustainable Development Goals call for ending the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases (target 3.3) and for reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases (target 3.4).

28. The probability of dying between the ages of 15 and 60 is a summary measure of mortality risks during the reproductive and working ages. While mortality at these ages has fallen substantially in most areas since the 1970s, the pace of progress has been much slower than for childhood mortality. Globally in the period 2010-2015, the chance that a person turning age 15 would die before reaching age 60 was around 15 per cent (figure IX). The risk was lowest, at about 10 per cent, in Northern America and Oceania and was about 13 to 14 per cent in Asia, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. In Africa this probability was about 29 per cent, over twice as high as in any other major area of the world. In Africa, mortality at ages 15 to 60 rose after 1985 as the HIV/AIDS epidemic worsened. With the increased availability of anti54retroviral drugs, survival prospects in Africa have begun improving again. However, the world is still far from ending the AIDS epidemic and conquering other communicable diseases that contribute to Africa's excess mortality in comparison to other areas.

Figure IX

Probability of dying between ages 15 and 60 for the world and major areas, from 1970-1975 to 2025-2030



29. Globally, the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) fell by 44 per cent between 1990 and 2015, reaching 216 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015.[1]

[1] See *Trends in maternal mortality: 1990 to 2015: estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division* (WHO, 2015, Geneva).

Approximately 303,000 women died from maternal causes in 2015, compared to an estimated 532,000 in 1990. Although all developing regions have experienced substantial reductions in maternal mortality, few countries reached the Millennium Development Goal of reducing MMR by 75 per cent between 1990 and 2015. In sub-Saharan Africa, MMR remains above 500 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, far higher than in other areas. The level of the MMR is also relatively high — between 100 and 200 — in the Caribbean, in Oceania and in South-eastern and Southern Asia. Greatly accelerated progress will be needed for the world to reach Sustainable Development Goal target 3.1 of reducing the MMR to less than 70 by 2030.

30. Old-age mortality is commonly measured by the life expectancy at age 60. In the period 2010-2015, the average person turning age 60 could expect to live an additional 20.2 years, to reach age 80.2. For women, life expectancy at age 60 is 21.5 years and for men, 18.7 years. These are global averages, however, and disparities among the major areas follow a pattern similar to the survival disparities observed at younger ages. Life expectancy at age 60 is highest (about 22 to 24 years) in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America and Oceania; it is about 19 years in Asia and is lowest, at about 17 years, in Africa. Survival prospects at older ages have been improving in most countries, including those with the highest life expectancies. Over the next 15 years, global life expectancy at age 60 is projected to increase by over a year, to reach 21.6 years in the period 2025-2030.

V. International migration

31. In 2015, there were 244 million international migrants worldwide. Approximately 48 per cent of international migrants were women, and 52 per cent were men. The majority (72 per cent) of international migrants were aged 20-64 years, 15 per cent were under 20 years old and 13 per cent were 65 or older. Europe hosted the largest number of international migrants in 2015, 76 million, followed by Asia with 75 million and Northern America with 54 million. Some 21 million migrants lived in Africa, 9 million in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 8 million in Oceania.

32. Between 2000 and 2015, the number of international migrants grew by about 71 million, or nearly 5 million per annum. Asia, Europe and Northern America absorbed most of this increase. In Asia, the number of international migrants grew by 26 million, while in Europe it increased by 20 million and in Northern America by 14 million. The other regions gained smaller numbers of migrants.

33. The growth in the number of migrants worldwide was due primarily to an increase in the number of migrants from countries of Asia. Between 2000 and 2015, the number of international migrants originating from Asia increased by 54 per cent, from 65 million in 2000 to 100 million in 2015, accounting for nearly half of the total increase. During the same period, the increase was also significant for international migrants originating from Africa (11 million), Latin America and the Caribbean (11 million), and Europe (10 million).

34. At the end of 2014, the number of refugees globally reached about 19.5 million.[2] According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

[2] UNHCR, *Global Trends 2014: Enforced Displacement in 2014* (Geneva, 2015).

the largest numbers of refugees originated from the Syrian Arab Republic (3.9 million), Afghanistan (2.6 million) and Somalia (1.1 million). Lebanon hosted the largest number of refugees in relation to its population size.

35. Migrants made up 3.3 per cent of the global population in 2015, compared to 2.8 per cent in 2000. There were, however, considerable regional differences in the proportion of international migrants in the total population. In Europe, Northern America and Oceania, international migrants accounted for at least 10 per cent of the population, whereas in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean they made up less than 2 per cent.

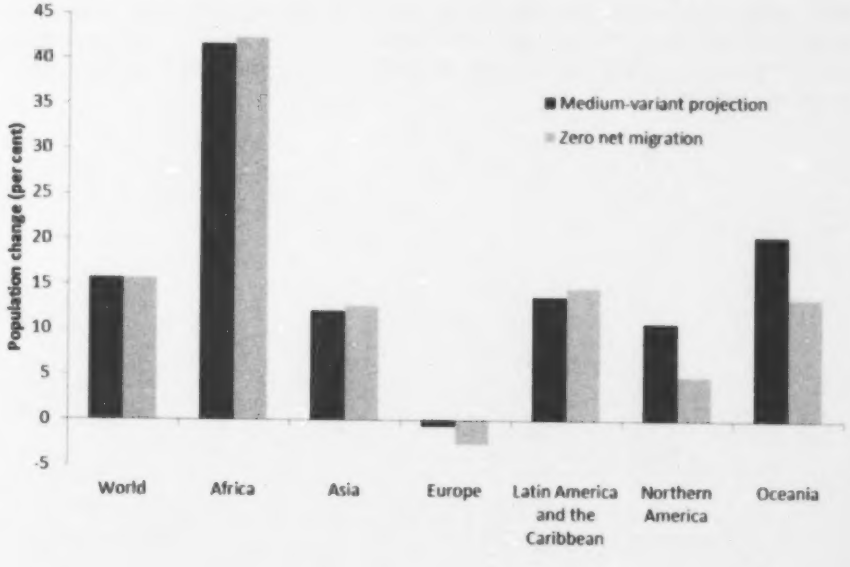
36. In many parts of the world, international migration has contributed to sustaining population growth. Between 2000 and 2015, the net inflow of migrants accounted for 42 per cent of the population growth in Northern America and 32 per cent in Oceania. In Europe the size of the population would have declined between 2000 and 2015 in the absence of international migration. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, outmigration accounted for the slight slowing in the magnitude of population growth.

37. Looking ahead, international migration is projected to make a significant impact on changes in the size of the total population in Europe, Northern America and Oceania between 2015 and 2030. Figure X compares population growth in the medium-variant projection to a scenario in which the flow of immigrants and emigrants for each country balances to zero after 2015. In Europe, although a continuation of recent levels of migration would not be enough to compensate for the surplus of deaths over births, population decline would be more pronounced, and would start earlier, under the scenario of zero net migration.

Figure X

Projected effect of net migration on the change in population size from 2015 to 2030, for major areas of the world

(Percentage of 2015 population)



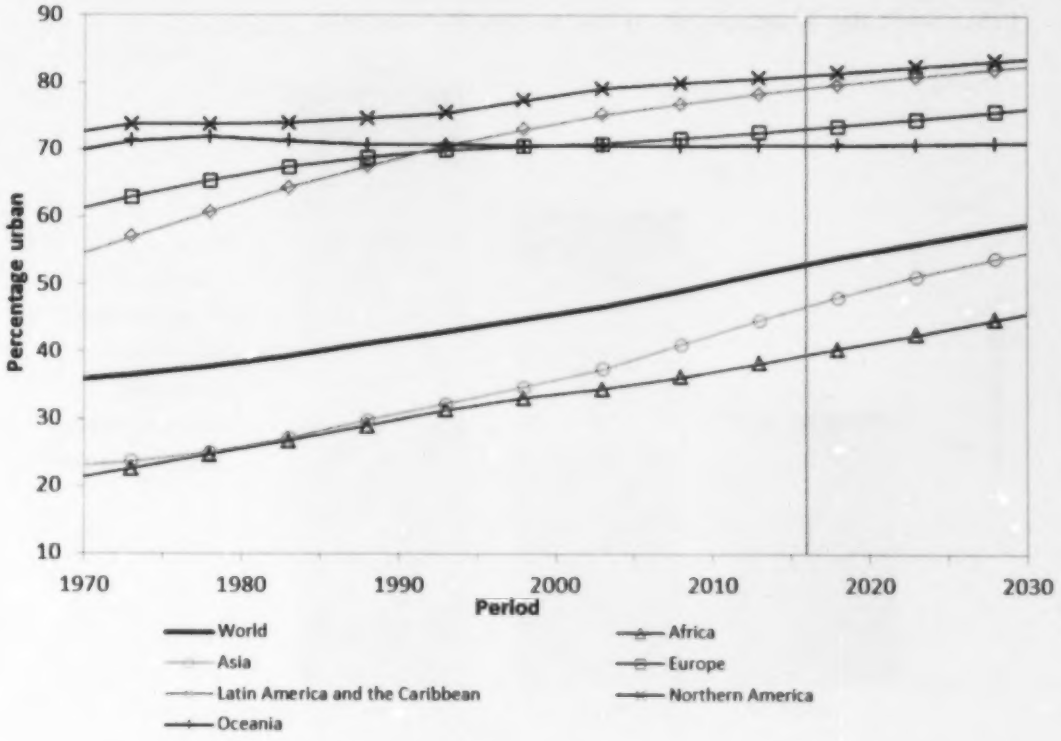
38. Although international migration will not halt the long-term trend towards population ageing, net positive levels of migration can slow the increase in old-age dependency ratios. International migration can also help in meeting domestic labour market demands, because international migrants tend to include a larger proportion of working-age persons than the overall population. For instance, in Europe, the old-age dependency ratio, measured as the number of persons aged 65 or over per 100 persons aged 15 to 64, is projected to be 3 points lower in 2050 than if there were zero net migration after 2015 (51 vs. 48 older persons per 100 of working age). In Northern America the ratio would be 5 points lower without international migration and in Oceania it would be 4 points lower.

39. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the positive contributions of migrants to the development of societies of origin and destination. Further, it recognizes the collective responsibility to ensure that the rights of migrants are fully respected and upheld. The 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals include targets to promote safe, orderly and regular migration, to fight human trafficking, and to facilitate the transfer of remittances. Other goals address some of the key root causes of involuntary, irregular and forced migration, including poverty, inequality and insecurity.

VI. Urbanization

40. A growing proportion of humanity is concentrated in urban settlements, and virtually all of the future growth of the world's population will take place in cities. The share of the world's population living in urban areas is projected to increase from 54 per cent in 2015 to 60 per cent in 2030 (figure XI). Northern America was the most urbanized region of the world in 2015, with 82 per cent of the population concentrated in urban settlements, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (80 per cent) and Europe (74 per cent). While Africa and Asia remained mostly rural in 2015, with 40 per cent and 48 per cent of their respective populations living in urban areas, these regions are currently urbanizing much faster than the rest. By 2030, urban settlements are projected to house 47 per cent of Africa's population, 56 per cent of Asia's, 71 per cent of Oceania's, 77 per cent of Europe's and more than 80 per cent of the populations of Latin America and the Caribbean and of Northern America.

Figure XI
Proportion of total population residing in urban areas for the world and major areas, from 1970 to 2030

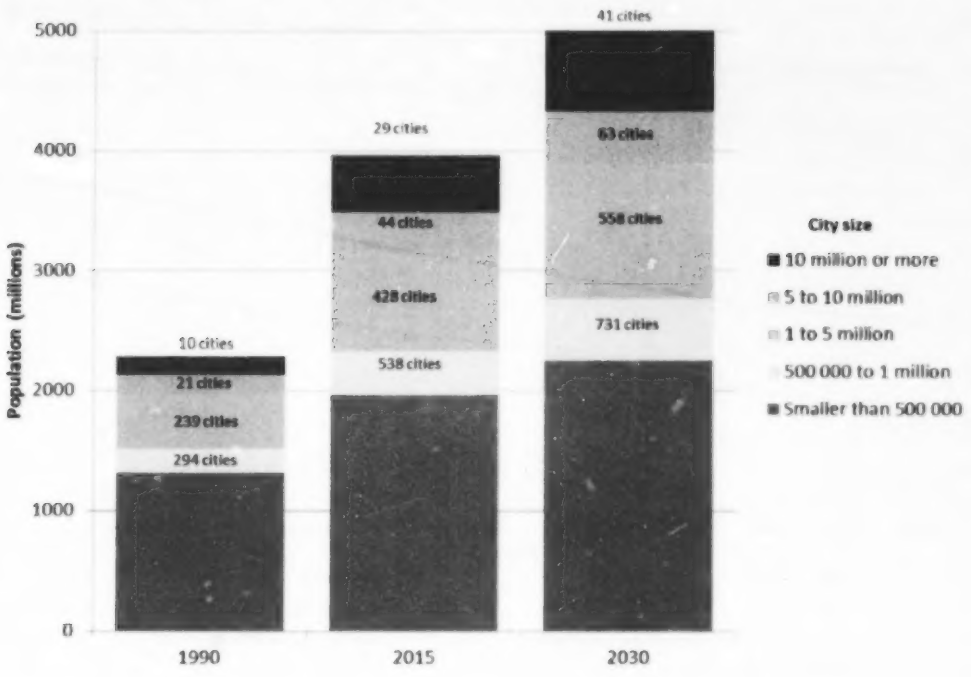


41. As the global urban population has grown, so too has the number of cities and the population of most cities. In 1950, only two urban agglomerations, New York-Newark and Tokyo, were "megacities", with more than 10 million inhabitants. Together, they accounted for just 3 per cent of the global urban population. By 2015 the number of megacities had grown to 29 and, as a group, they contained 12 per cent of the global urban population. By 2030 the number of cities with at least 10 million inhabitants is projected to increase to 41, and 14 per cent of urban dwellers worldwide will live in megacities (figure XII).

42. However, in 2015, most (59 per cent) of the world's urban dwellers lived in cities with fewer than 1 million inhabitants. In fact, urban population growth has been propelled by the growth of cities of all sizes. The number of large cities — those with 5 to 10 million inhabitants — more than doubled over the past 25 years, from 21 in 1990 to 44 in 2015, and projections indicate that there will be 63 cities with 5 to 10 million inhabitants in 2030. The number of medium-sized cities with 1 to 5 million inhabitants, and of smaller cities with fewer than 1 million inhabitants, has increased significantly as well. With continued city growth and urbanization, the proportion of the world's population that is concentrated in smaller cities has been declining: in 1950, 75 per cent of the world's urban dwellers lived in cities with

fewer than 1 million inhabitants, but projections suggest that by 2030 such smaller cities will account for about 55 per cent of the global urban population.

Figure XII
Urban population by category of city size, in 1990, 2015 and 2030



43. Urbanization has generally been a positive force for economic development and poverty reduction. Cities concentrate the large and diverse pools of labour that are needed for sustained economic growth. The density of people and businesses in cities facilitates knowledge and information-sharing, fostering new enterprises and technological innovation. As hubs of commerce, government, and transportation, cities provide crucial links to rural areas, with other cities, and across international borders. Approximately 80 per cent of global gross domestic product is generated in cities.[3]

44. With sufficient planning and institutional capacity, Governments are able to take advantage of urban economies of scale to provide infrastructure such as roads, piped water and electricity, as well as basic services such as education and health care, to a large population at much lower costs than would be required for the same number of people dispersed over rural areas. Urban living is often associated with higher levels of literacy and education, women's status and labour force participation, as well as better health, greater access to social services, and enhanced opportunities for cultural and political participation.

[3] IPCC, 2014: *Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

45. Nevertheless, rapid and unplanned urban growth threatens sustainable development when the necessary infrastructure is not developed or when policies are not implemented to ensure that the benefits of city life are equitably shared. In 2014, more than 880 million people, representing 30 per cent of urban residents in developing regions, lived in slums or informal settlements, characterized by inadequate, overcrowded housing, or lacking access to improved water and sanitation or security against eviction.[4] Although the proportion of urban residents in developing countries living in slums has fallen from 39 per cent in 2000 to 30 per cent in 2014, the number of people living in slums continues to grow owing to ongoing urbanization.

46. The future growth of cities and concomitant appropriation of land and natural resources will shape the prospects for an environmentally sustainable future. In some cities, unplanned or inadequately managed urban expansion leads to sprawl, pollution and environmental degradation. Today's cities are growing twice as fast in terms of land area as they are in terms of population.[3] Such urban expansion is associated with an increased use of automobiles and, in some areas, contributes to deforestation and risks destroying habitats.

47. Government policies for planning and managing urban growth can help ensure that the benefits are shared equitably and sustainably. Policies that aim to restrict rural-urban migration are largely ineffective at forestalling city growth and can even result in economic, social and environmental harm. Sustainable urbanization requires that cities generate better income and employment opportunities; expand the necessary infrastructure for water and sanitation, energy, transportation and communication; ensure equitable access to services; reduce the number of people living in slums; and preserve the natural assets within the city and surrounding areas.

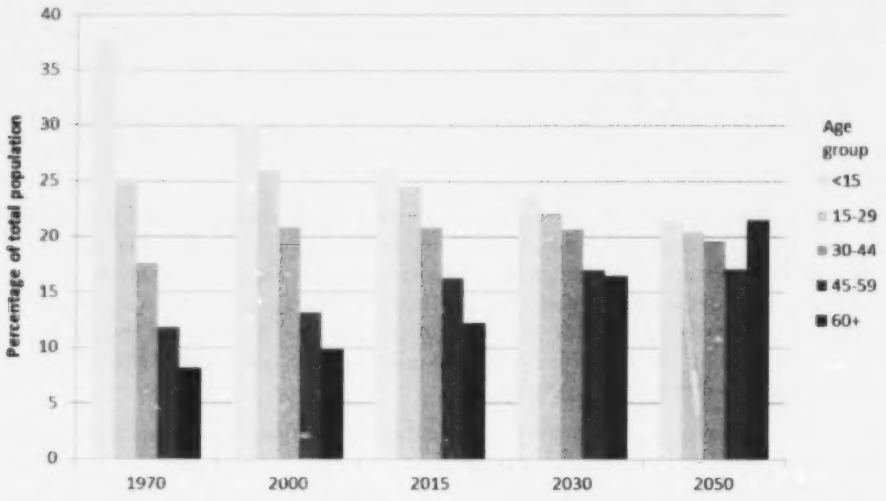
VII. Changing population age structures and population ageing

48. The world is going through a long-term transformation towards an older population age structure (figure XIII). Countries began this process at different times and are proceeding through it at varying speeds, depending mainly on the timing and pace of the decline in fertility. In the decades after the start of a sustained fertility decline, the relative proportions of working-age adults and older persons both rise as the proportion of children declines.

[4] United Nations (2015). *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*.

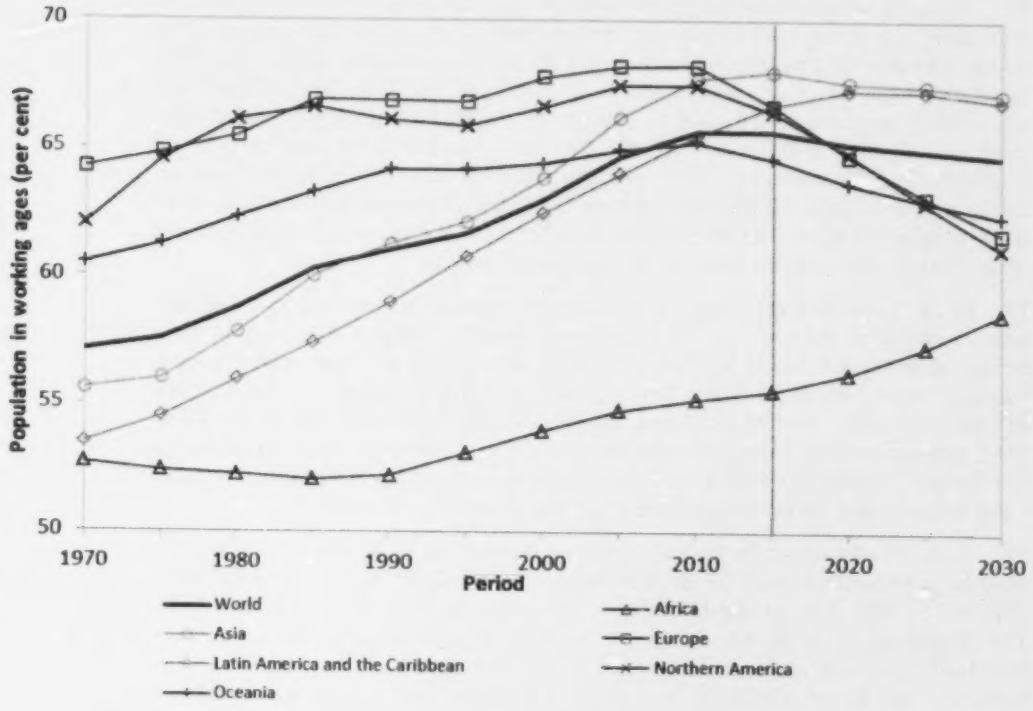
Figure XIII

Percentage distribution of the global population by broad age groups, selected years from 1970 to 2050



49. In all areas of the world, people of working age (ages 15-64) made up a higher proportion of the population in 2015 than in 1970 (figure XIV). In Asia, the proportion increased by 12 percentage points (from 56 to 68 per cent), and in Latin America and the Caribbean it rose by 13 percentage points. In other areas the increases were much smaller. In Africa, the proportion of people of working age began rising only in about 1990, and by 2015 it was still much lower (at 56 per cent of the total population) than in other major areas (ranging from 65 to 68 per cent). Many countries will experience further increases in the proportion of persons of working age between 2015 and 2030, while others have already reached the peak proportion or will do so between 2015 and 2030. In Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean, the proportion of the population of working age will be near its peak level throughout this period. In Europe, Northern America and Oceania, this proportion has already passed the peak level, and it is projected to decline between 2015 and 2030 by 5 percentage points in Europe and Northern America and by 2 points in Oceania. There is wide variation in this regard among countries within these regions. For instance, in four Asian countries the proportion of persons of working age is projected to increase by over 5 percentage points between 2015 and 2030, whereas it will decline by 5 points or more in nine countries or areas of the same region (including the largest, China).

Figure XIV
Working-age population (ages 15-64) as a percentage of the total for the world and major areas, from 1970 to 2030



50. The period of rising proportions of people of working age has been called a "demographic window of opportunity" or "demographic dividend". Provided that the economy generates decent jobs for the growing number of workers, an increasing ratio of workers to dependants provides a boost to income per capita and can potentially free up resources for investment that will foster sustainable development and lead to higher living standards over the long term. Even after the working-age proportion passes its peak, it usually remains substantially above historical levels for an extended period, a demographic situation that is still relatively favourable for sustained investment in human and physical capital. Moreover, the expectation of longer lives may prompt the accumulation of assets to support consumption during retirement, building the overall level of wealth in a population. These benefits are not guaranteed, but can arise if societies take advantage of the period when the proportion of workers is rising, or is still relatively high, to save and invest in ways that promote sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Investments in health, education and employment opportunities for young people are key measures to maximize the economic benefits of changing dependency ratios.

51. During the period from 2015 to 2030, a large majority of countries in Asia, Oceania, and Latin America and the Caribbean will be in stages of the demographic transition that are the most favourable for realizing the benefits of rising or still-

high proportions in the working ages. Most countries in Africa during this period will still be in the early stages of this process, whereas the majority of high-income countries are already in the more advanced stages characterized by population ageing.

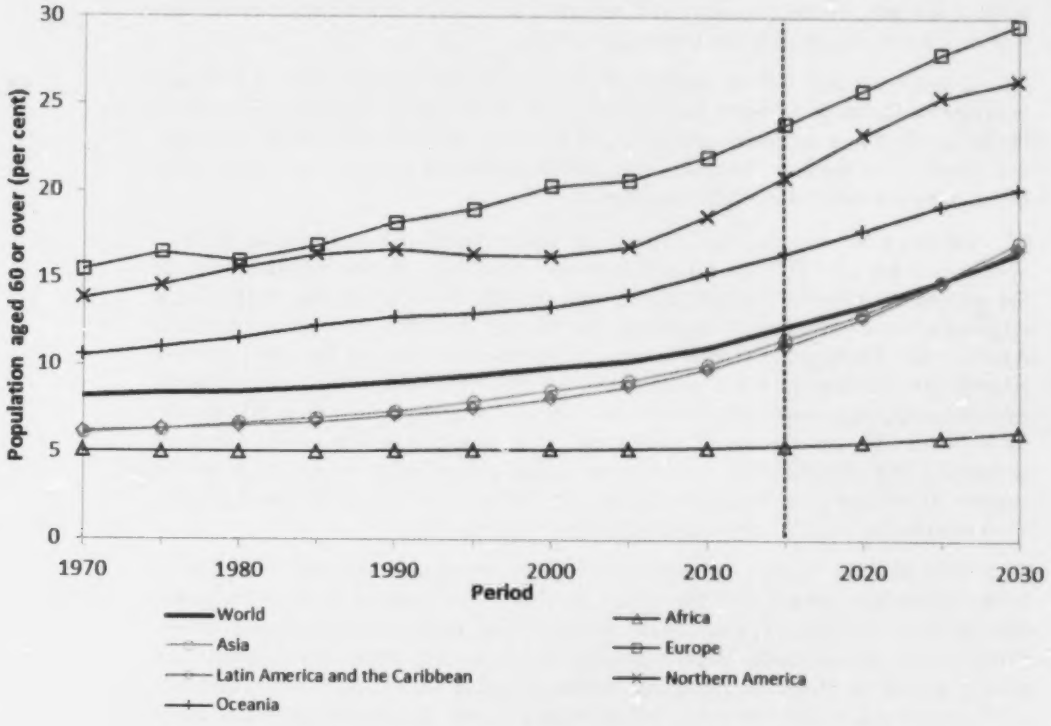
52. Globally, older persons (aged 60 years or over) constitute the fastest growing population age group, and nearly everywhere their share of the total population is rising. Virtually all countries will experience a substantial increase in the size of the population aged 60 years or over between 2015 and 2030. In 2015, there were 901 million persons aged 60 years or over in the world. That number is projected to grow to 1.4 billion in 2030 and 2.1 billion by 2050. Growth in the older population is projected to be especially rapid in Latin America and the Caribbean, with an increase of more than 70 per cent between 2015 and 2030, and in Africa and Asia, with increases of more than 60 per cent. In other areas the increase in numbers will range from 23 per cent in Europe to 47 per cent in Oceania.

53. In 2015, one in eight people worldwide was aged 60 or over, and by 2030, that ratio is projected to reach one in six people globally. Population ageing is most advanced in Europe and in Northern America, where more than one in five people was aged 60 or over in 2015, while the proportion is rising rapidly in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Oceania, though starting from lower levels. By 2030, older persons are expected to account for more than 25 per cent of the population in Europe and in Northern America, 20 per cent in Oceania, 17 per cent in Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 6 per cent in Africa (figure XV).

54. High-income countries tend to be the most aged. Japan is home to the world's most aged population, with 33 per cent of persons aged 60 years or over in 2015, followed by Italy (29 per cent), Germany (28 per cent), and Finland (27 per cent). The proportion of older persons was also high in several upper-middle-income European countries, such as Bulgaria (27 per cent aged 60 or over in 2015), Romania and Serbia (both 24 per cent). Comparatively young age structures prevailed among countries at the lower end of the income distribution: in nearly every low-income country and in about 85 per cent of lower-middle-income countries in 2015, fewer than 1 in 10 people was aged 60 or over.

55. Over the next 15 years, several upper-middle-income countries are projected to become as aged as today's high-income countries. For example, between 2015 and 2030 the share of people aged 60 years or over is projected to increase from 15 to 25 per cent in China, from 16 to 27 per cent in Thailand and from 19 to 32 per cent in Cuba. Some lower-middle-income countries are projected to age rapidly as well. For example, the proportion of older people is projected to increase from 14 to 21 per cent in Sri Lanka, from 10 to 18 per cent in Viet Nam, and from 10 to 15 per cent in Morocco. In most low-income and lower-middle-income countries, however, the share of older persons is projected to remain below 10 per cent through 2030.

Figure XV
Percentage of the population aged 60 years or over for the world and major areas, from 1970 to 2030



VIII. Conclusions

56. The global population numbered 7.3 billion in 2015 and is currently growing at 1.2 per cent per year. It is projected to reach 8.5 billion in 2030. According to the medium-variant projection of the United Nations, population will continue to increase during the rest of the century, reaching 11.2 billion in 2100. Most of the population growth between 2015 and 2030 will occur in Africa and Asia. A challenge for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is that much of this population growth will be concentrated in countries facing the largest gaps in ending poverty and hunger and ensuring health, education and equality for all. Population growth remains especially rapid in the 48 least developed countries, of which 27 are in Africa.

57. Today, most of the countries with high fertility (four or more children per woman) are in sub-Saharan Africa. These countries have young populations that are growing rapidly. At the other extreme, 83 countries had below-replacement fertility (below 2.1 children per woman) in the period 2010-2015. Countries with sustained below-replacement fertility will experience rapid ageing of their populations during the period 2015-2030.

58. The level of unmet need for family planning has decreased in most regions of the world since 1990. However, 12 per cent of married or in-union women still had an unmet need for family planning in 2015, and the level is much higher in Africa. Accelerated investment in providing information and services will be needed to achieve the goal of ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, by 2030.

59. Life expectancy at birth reached 70 years in the period from 2010 to 2015 and is projected to rise to 74 years by 2025-2030. There has been substantial progress in lowering child and maternal mortality and in combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic, but efforts will need to be sustained and strengthened to meet the Sustainable Development Goals for mortality and health.

60. International migrants made up 3.3 per cent of the world's population in 2015, up from 2.8 per cent in 2000. Asia, Europe and Northern America absorbed most of the increase in migrant numbers during that period. In some regions, international migration has contributed to sustaining population growth. In adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Governments recognized the positive contribution of migrants for sustainable development and agreed to cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of all migrants, refugees and displaced persons. These commitments are already being tested by a recent surge in the number of refugees. In September 2016, the General Assembly will hold a high-level meeting to address large-scale population movements.

61. Over half the world's population now lives in urban areas, and nearly all of future population growth will take place in cities. The number of large cities has been growing rapidly, and they house an increasing proportion of urban dwellers. Urbanization has generally been a positive force for economic development and poverty reduction. However, rapid and unplanned urban growth threatens sustainable development when the necessary infrastructure is not developed, or when urban growth leads to the expansion of slums, urban sprawl, pollution and environmental degradation.

62. A rising share of workers in the population provides a "demographic window of opportunity" for sustained economic growth and sustainable development. In all of the world's major areas, the share of working-age people in the total population was higher in 2015 than in 1970. Many countries, including a growing number in Africa, will experience further increases in that proportion between 2015 and 2030. Others have already reached the peak proportion or will do so by 2030. Policies to develop human capital, provide decent jobs and promote savings and investment will enable countries to benefit while the working-age proportion is rising or still high, and to adjust to the subsequent period characterized by population ageing.

63. In 2015, persons aged 60 or over made up 12 per cent of the global population, and by 2030, this will increase to 16 per cent. Population ageing is most advanced in Europe and in Northern America, while ageing is progressing rapidly in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Oceania, though starting from lower levels. By 2030, older persons are expected to account for more than 25 per cent of the population in Europe and in Northern America, 20 per cent in Oceania, 17 per cent in Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 6 per cent in Africa.

64. Demographic changes over the next 15 years will help to shape the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Countries will be implementing the 2030 Agenda from very different starting points regarding levels of fertility, mortality and urbanization. They will experience widely differing rates of growth for their populations of children entering school, of young people entering the labour force and beginning their reproductive years, and of persons entering the older age range and eventually needing support of various kinds. National strategies will need to take account of these demographic realities, which will partially determine the resources required to achieve the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.